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Gorbachev in Britain, Emphasizes Disarmament

By WILLIAM TUOHY, *Times Staff Writer*

LONDON—Mikhail S. Gorbachev, widely thought to be the No. 2 man in the Soviet hierarchy, declared here Saturday that his country is prepared to limit and ultimately ban all forms of weapons.

In what is being seen here as an important statement of the Kremlin's viewpoint today, Gorbachev said: "There are no types of armaments that the Soviet Union would not agree to see limited and eventually banned in agreement with other states on a reciprocal basis."

Gorbachev, a leading member of the Politburo, added that "our country has never sought, nor is it seeking military superiority. It has never been, nor will it ever be, the one to start any new round in the arms race."

Gorbachev made his statements on arrival at Heathrow Airport as head of a 30-member Soviet delegation, the first such high-level mission to Britain in several years.

Under Close Scrutiny

It was Gorbachev's first visit to the West since his rise to prominence and influence over foreign policy within the Soviet government, and therefore his actions and statements are being studied with great care here.

Gorbachev will meet Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for lunch today at her official country residence, Chequers. She will depart Monday for Peking, Hong Kong and the United States.

The prime minister's aides say that she will give President Reagan a first-hand account of her talks with Gorbachev and with Chinese leaders with whom she will sign an agreement on the future of the British colony of Hong Kong.

Gorbachev, 53, is considered one of a new breed of young Soviet leaders, and some Kremlinologists believe that he will succeed the ailing Soviet President Konstantin U. Chernenko when the latter leaves the scene.

The Soviet leader is not in Britain as an official guest of the government. He came at the invitation of the British chapter of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He will meet with leaders of British political parties during his week-long visit.

Gorbachev's trip is being viewed by the prime minister, sources in her office said, as an exceptional opportunity to sound out the Soviets on how serious they will be in approaching renewed nuclear arms limitation talks, beginning with next month's preliminary discussions in Geneva, where Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko is scheduled to meet with Secretary of State George P. Shultz on Jan. 7-8.

Dressed in a pinstripe suit and overcoat, Gorbachev seemed on his arrival to be telegraphing a new willingness on the part of the Soviets to negotiate.

"The Soviet Union proceeds

from the conviction that however complicated the international situation," his statement said, "opportunities for the prevention of nuclear war exist. These opportunities must be used to the full, not missed."

Among those in the Gorbachev delegation are eight members of the Supreme Soviet, the country's nominal Parliament, including Yevgeny P. Velikhov, a prominent nuclear physicist and arms control expert.

Other Party Leaders

In addition to seeing the prime minister today, Gorbachev will meet Foreign Minister Geoffrey Howe on Monday, and during the week he will see Labor Party leader Neil Kinnock, Social Democratic head David Owen, and Liberal Party leader David Steel.

The Soviet delegation will visit British factories and agricultural projects and end their weeklong tour in the Edinburgh area.

After his Saturday arrival, Gorbachev and his group went sightseeing by car and visited the British Museum.

They were taken into the large domed Reading Room where Karl Marx studied and wrote his seminal tract, "Das Kapital."

Accompanied by his wife, Gorbachev joked to his British hosts: "If people don't like Marxism, they should blame the British Museum."

Gorbachev studied law at Mos-

cow University but made his mark as an agricultural expert in his native Stavropol, north of the Caucasus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

In 1978, he was transferred to Moscow to take charge of Soviet agriculture and was quickly introduced into the Soviet ruling body, the Politburo.

Gorbachev comes to Britain as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet, a post that has given him a leading role in foreign policy-making, along with the veteran Foreign Minister Gromyko.

Gorbachev has previously visited Belgium in 1972, West Germany in 1975, France in 1976, and Canada in 1983.

During his visit to Ottawa, he appeared before Canadian parliamentary committees and took part in a give-and-take question session of a kind that Soviet politicians almost never experience.

He was queried about Soviet SS-20 missiles, exit visas for Soviet citizens and even the activities of the KGB security police in Canada. He answered the questions courteously and self-confidently, and appeared to have been well briefed.

Aides of Thatcher said they welcome the Gorbachev visit.

"We want to size him up, just as he will be sizing us up," one senior official said.